

As you may know, beginning last week, a highly complex and dangerous situation emerged in the streets of Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets in Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, and other cities, to air an assortment of grievances with the Egyptian government. Complicating the situation, the Egyptian government used its emergency powers to restrict citizens' access to phone service and the Internet. An escalation occurred on Friday, when in defiance of a government-imposed curfew, violence and chaos broke out in several major cities.

People have the right to express their concerns with the government, and there must be space within Egyptian civil society for the highest aspirations of the people. Peaceful and pragmatic dialogue is a necessary hallmark of democratic change, and the international community immediately appealed to both the Egyptian government and the Egyptian protesters to refrain from acts of violence.

In response to Friday's protests, Egypt's president, Hosni Mubarak, dissolved his entire cabinet. On Saturday, he began the process of putting new leaders in place, but protests continued to occur and multiply as Egyptian citizens demanded his resignation from office. I have maintained that it is important that a fair outcome addresses the sources of citizens' tension and despair while preventing exploitation of the situation by violent extremists.

My office has received questions from constituents on why this is an important issue for Congress' involvement. Egypt is the cultural and historic center of the Arab world and has provided a stabilizing influence in the volatile Middle East. Thirty years ago Egypt made peace with Israel after numerous wars and as a consequence Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was assassinated. But the peace has held. This is a critical moment for the future of the country and the region—and our own economy. The unrest in Egypt is causing uncertainty in world markets, particularly regarding oil prices.

Furthermore, this is part of a larger political paradigm in the Middle East. Recent weeks have also seen popular uprisings of various strengths in Tunisia, Yemen, and Jordan. Volatility in this area of the world has the potential to spill over to certain troubling spheres—terrorism and nuclear proliferation—and as a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I have special responsibilities for ensuring global stability.

The Egyptian people have made it clear that they want the United States, as a longstanding ally of Egypt, to hear them. As the situation unfolds, we should do everything possible to help identify urgent humanitarian needs, further urge the development of civil capacity, and support reasoned ideas for peaceful and orderly governance.

Lastly, individuals wishing to check on the safety of American family and friends in Egypt may email the U.S. State Department at EgyptEmergencyUSC@state.gov or call 1-888-407-4747.